



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA

Fairfax VOTER

January 2011

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Gerrymandering and Domestic Violence Featured Topics for January Program

January's program plans offer you two wonderful opportunities to escape winter cabin fever. An excellent film on the ins and outs of the thriving practice known as "gerrymandering," by which politicians choose their voters, will be shown at Pohick Library on Sunday, January 16, starting at 1:30 p.m. Read about it on Page 5. The following Saturday, the 22nd, will be our yearly General Meeting and Luncheon at the Fairfax Country Club. The speaker before the luncheon will be Mehagen McRae, an award winning advocate in the field of domestic violence. Non-lunching League members and the public are invited to attend the speech starting at 10:30 and no reservations are needed. More information on Page 3 with a reservation form on Page 11.

Calendar

January (No Unit Meetings)

- 01 New Year's Day
- 03 February Fairfax Voter Deadline
- 07 NCA Board Meeting
- 08 No. VA Gen. Assembly.Delegation
Public Hearing
- 12 2011 Gen. Assembly Convenes (45
day session)
- 16 "Gerrymandering - The Movie"
- 17 MLK Day/ School Closed
- 19 **Board Meeting at Packard Center**
- 19 WRT Richmond (first one)
- 22 General Meeting- Country Club of
Fairfax (Topic: Domestic Violence)
- 26 WRT Richmond

February

- 2 League Day

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The President's Message

And a HAPPY NEW YEAR to all!

Again, I am trying to figure out how to present what I want to say this month. I do not want to be too fearful, nor do I want to act as if things are not as serious as they are. Hey, we have the Silver legacy – what's to worry about?

First, the legacy is to be our foundation for the coming decades. But you need to build walls on the foundation and that is what we are missing. By walls I mean leaders. It gets harder and harder to find people who will sit on the LWVFA board by attending the monthly board meetings. So, we have split up the portfolio duties into on-board and off-board positions. We have tried having committees helping the portfolio director and yet we still cannot fill all of our on board positions (*See the list of vacancies and Nominating Committee members in a separate article on page 6*).

And we are trying something else new – Co-President. We changed the bylaws at the 2010 Annual Meeting to have co-presidents serving staggered terms. The idea was to have one experienced co-president and a learning co-president who would take over as the experienced president the next year. Believe me, there is enough for two people to do. But, guess what? We cannot find anyone to be Co-President. And I **will not** be President next year without a Co-President and that is final! There is a tendency in LWVFA for people to take on board positions for life – or so it seems – thus leaving a “hole” with no one trained to fill the position once the position becomes vacant. I know the pressure of being told there is “no one else who will do it” and what would happen if no one steps up? **You** are the only one that can answer that question.

There was a workshop at the 2010 LWVUS convention about streamlining Leagues by having board members, but not in the regular portfolios. Each League would decide what was most important and that is what they would concentrate on – leaving out other events and programs that the League had been doing for years. A group from the board, such as the Executive Committee if there is one, would take turns preparing the monthly board meeting agendas and then running the meetings. Frankly, I'm not quite sure there would be an actual President in this scenario, possibly just a “convener” with a board member serving as the League

contact person for the year. Is this the type of management structure you want for LWVFA?

There are three choices – first, keeping the same structure we have now (this requires some more people to step up to be leaders); second, the committee structure; and third, no LWVFA. Yes, it has become that dire. And yes, we are getting new members and they are great new members but they are NEW and cannot be expected to help run the LWVFA the first year they join. We have a gap between experienced members and new members. Do you want to team up new with experienced?

I'm not declaring the end of the world here and I sure don't want to be declaring the end of LWVFA. And, no, I do not want to be the **last** President! So, please let us know how we can keep on doing what LWVFA has been doing for over 60 years in our community.....or not.

We Are Back “Home” at the Packard Center

The location of the LWVFA office has returned to the Packard Center on Hummer Road. Thanks to the generosity of Supervisor Gross, the office had temporarily moved to the Mason District Governmental Center while the Packard Center was being renovated to bring the building up to current building codes. With freshly painted walls, new electrical wiring, heating and air conditioning, LWVFA is “back home” in January. Come check us out.

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2010 - 2011

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Please e-mail address corrections to the office
or call 703-658-9150

Send in Your Registration Form Today . . .

January General Meeting to Feature Award-Winning Advocate In the Field of Domestic Violence

By Lois Page, LWVFA Program Director

LWVFA's January General 2011 Meeting, spotlighting the issue of domestic violence, will be in support of the ongoing study which has taken on the challenge of reviewing and updating our local League positions on domestic violence issues.

The speaker for the event is local attorney Mehagen D. McRae, who will talk about "Domestic Violence Today." The meeting will start at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 22, at the Country Club of Fairfax on Ox Road (Route 123); Ms McRae will speak at 10:30 a.m. The program is free and the public is invited. Reservation form for the luncheon following is on page 11 of this *VOTER*.

Ms. McRae is the head of the domestic relations practice group at MacDowell & Associates. In April 2005, she was recognized by the Northern Virginia Victim Assistance Coalition and received their Champion Award for her advocacy on behalf of victims of domestic violence. She is the only private attorney to ever be recognized by the Coalition with this award. In addition, she is a member of the Domestic Violence coalitions for the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County. Ms. McRae is also a conciliator for the Fairfax Bar Association.

Further, Ms. McRae is the former Domestic Violence Staff Attorney for Legal Services of Northern Virginia ("LSNV"), a non-profit organization that provides free legal assistance in civil matters to low-income individuals. While at LSNV, she trained numerous private attorneys on obtaining protective orders for victims, regardless of the nature of the injuries, and arranged pro bono representation for victims by private attorneys. In addition, Ms. McRae has provided training on domestic violence and protective orders to the substitute judges for Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations, to the Muslim religious leaders for the metropolitan area at the 2002 Multi-faith Religious Leaders Conference, to the Fairfax Commission on Women, and for domestic violence advocates.

Mehagen D. McRae is a graduate of the American University, Washington College of Law where she earned her J.D. in 2000. A luncheon will follow Ms. McRae's presentation for which reservations are required. The cost is \$35 and a reservation form is on our website, www.lwv-fairfax.org.

LWVFA Committee Chair Barbara Nunes reports that the Domestic Violence Committee plans to prepare an update of their efforts for the October 2011 units. The committee, which would welcome additional members, plans to interview key players in the domestic relations field and tour the new Juvenile and domestic Relations Court and Visitation Center. (see separate article)

LWVFA's current position concerning domestic relations focuses primarily on juvenile problems and child abuse. The State League (LWV-VA) has a position on adult domestic violence that supports uniform law enforcement training for involved medical, clerical and law enforcement personnel, and assistance and training programs for victims.

Proposed Tour of New Courthouse and Visitation Center Planned for April

By Barbara Nunes, LWVFA Domestic Violence Chair

Many of you participated in the court observation program by visiting the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to observe protective orders and domestic violence cases. Since then, the court has moved to new quarters in the new Justice Center where the Circuit Court is located. The court's new location has been up and running for over a year. Come and see what changes have occurred in the physical layout. In addition, we propose visiting the Visitation Exchange Facility located in the historic courthouse. It has recently been renovated. The Exchange Facility is where court ordered visitations occur and they can always use volunteers.

No date has been set yet but we are looking at the second week in April. If you want more information or wish to join our committee, contact me at bnunes@juno.com or 703-451-7238.

*The LWVFA Board Wishes
Everyone a
Happy Holiday Season!*

Some Historical Information About Domestic Violence

Contributed by Barbara Nunes,
LWVFA Domestic Violence Chair

[Ed. Note: From the MINCAVA Electronic Clearinghouse,
The History of Domestic Violence.]

Violence against wives is a right men exercised with impunity for centuries. This prerogative of men has been articulated in the precepts of religion, philosophy and law throughout the northern hemisphere. Physical violence against wives was deemed necessary for the “well-being” of women. It was couched in terms of corrective discipline and chastisement of erring wives (Davis, 1972). A medieval Christian scholar propagated *Rules of Marriage* in the late 15th Century. These specified:

When you see your wife commit an offense, don't rush at her with insults and violent blows.... Scold her sharply, bully and terrify her. And if this doesn't work...take up a stick and beat her soundly, for it is better to punish the body and correct the soul than to damage the soul and spare the body.... Then readily beat her, not in rage but out of charity and concern for her soul, so that the beating will redound to your merit and her good. (Davidson, 1978, at p. 99)

British common law later embraced, but limited, the husband's authority to assault wives by adopting the “rule of thumb” which permitted a man to beat his wife with a “rod not thicker than his thumb.” (Davidson, 1977)

Jurists and legislators in the United States followed in the tradition of the European clergy and lawmakers and approved the use of men's violence against their wives.

In 1824 the Mississippi Supreme Court in *Bradley v. State* voiced approval of the husband's role as disciplinarian and stated its belief that the law should not disturb that role: “Let the husband be permitted to exercise the right of moderate chastisement, in cases of great emergency, and use salutary restraints in every case of misbehaviour[sic], without being subjected to vexatious prosecutions, resulting in the mutual discredit and shame of all parties concerned.” *Bradley v. State*, 1 Miss. 156 (1824) (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982)

Not until 1871 did a court in this country rescind the legal right of men to beat their wives. The Alabama Supreme Court found:

The privilege, ancient though it be, to beat [one's wife] with a stick, to pull her hair, choke her, spit in her face or kick her about the floor, or to inflict upon her like indignities, is not now acknowledged by our law.... [I]n person, the wife is entitled to the same protection of the law that the husband can invoke for himself.... All stand upon the same footing before the law “as citizens of Alabama, possessing equal civil and political rights and public privileges.” *Fulgham v. State*, 46 Ala. 146-47 (1871) (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982)

But the highest court of another state (North Carolina) subsequently disagreed and endorsed a limited right of violence against wives:

If no permanent injury has been inflicted, nor malice, cruelty nor dangerous violence shown by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze, and leave the parties to forget and forgive. *State v. Oliver*, 70 N.C. 60, 61-62 (1874) (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982).

In 1882, Maryland was the first state to pass law that made wife-beating a crime, punishable by 40 lashes or a year in jail. (Davidson, 1977) Nonetheless, over the course of the ensuing century, men's use of violence went basically unfettered. Although technically no jurisdiction in this country now permits a husband to strike his wife or a man to assault his partner (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982), the reality is that men still use violence against wives without fear of reprisal in many jurisdictions.

<[mincava.umn.edu/document: her story of domestic violence: a timeline of the battered women's movement](http://mincava.umn.edu/document:her_story_of_domestic_violence:a_timeline_of_the_battered_women's_movement)>

MINCAVA is the **Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse**. The mission of MINCAVA is to support research, education, and access to violence related resources. The MINCAVA Electronic Clearinghouse is one of the projects of the Center. The Clearinghouse provides an extensive pool of up-to-date educational resources about all types of violence, including higher education syllabi, published research, funding sources, upcoming training events, individuals or organizations which serve as resources, and searchable databases with over 1000 training manuals, videos and other education resources. MINCAVA is directed by Jeffrey L. Edleson, PhD. and is located in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota and can be contacted at:

MINCAVA - University of Minnesota, 105 Peters Hall, 1404 Gortner Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108-6142 USA,

Just in Time for the Redistricting “Season” . . .

LWVFA/ LWVPWA to Show “Gerrymandering: The Movie”

In a continuing effort to educate League members AND the public, the Fairfax Area and Prince William Area League boards have agreed to rent the movie “Gerrymandering.” A convenient location to both counties is Pohick Regional Library where the movie will be shown. Dr. Michael McDonald from George Mason University (GMU) will introduce and comment on the movie (with Q&A in available time).

The LWV, on a local, state and national level has worked very hard trying to better the redistricting process. Showing this movie is another effort to help constituents understand current redistricting (in which gerrymandering takes place) in the hopes for a better process. The film was shown at the 2010 LWVUS Convention in Atlanta last June.

The political documentary “Gerrymandering: The Movie” was financed by Green Film Company and written and directed by Jeff Reichert. Reichert thought ‘Gerrymandering’ was a fascinating untold story that begged for feature-film treatment. He noted “... viewers are going to be stunned by what they see.” Production started in California with Reichert and director of photography Gary Griffin following Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in his successful push to pass Proposition 11. In addition to “Gerrymandering,” Green Film Company has financed the “United Obama Documentary,” and is producing an adaptation of the best-selling book *Freakonomics*.

Dr. Michael P. McDonald, Assistant Professor of Government and Politics in the Department of Public and International Affairs at George Mason University (GMU) and a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution will be on hand to discuss the movie and answer questions. He is known for his expertise in voting behavior and political methodology, including redistricting and American political development. His research on redistricting shows that voter turnout is not declining, the ineligible population is rising and he warns of the uncompetitive nature of elections as a

result of redistricting. He is currently working on developing open-source redistricting software that is accessible through a web browser (*see following article*).

When: Sunday, January. 16. 2011
Where: Pohick Regional Library 6450 Sydenstricker Rd., Burke, VA 22015, 703-644-7333
Time: Social Gathering 1:30, Program starts at 2:00 PM
Who: Open to public, bring friends and neighbors
Cost: Free

Dr. McDonald has worked as a redistricting consultant or expert witness in Alaska, Arizona, California, Michigan, and New York and has provided testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee. He is frequently quoted in the media regarding United States elections. He currently serves on the advisory boards of the Overseas Vote

Foundation and the Non-Profit Voter Engagement Network. He has formerly served on the Board of Directors for the Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) and was a member of the Fairfax County School Board Adult and Community Education Advisory Committee. He has authored several articles and op-eds on voting and elections and has spoken to many organizations, including The League of Women Voters.

The Fairfax and Prince William boards are hoping that the room will be filled on Jan. 16! Please spread the word about this movie. Invite family, friends and neighbors and



Michael McDonald.
(Photo by Evan Cantwell)

Dr. Michael P. McDonald is an Assistant Professor of Government and Politics at GMU and a Senior Non-resident Fellow at the Brookings Institution. McDonald has worked as a redistricting consultant for several states and has authored several articles and op-eds on voting and elections. . . He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from University of California, San Diego. His research interests include voting behavior, redistricting, Congress, American political development, and political methodology.

New Website Encourages Public Participation in Congressional Redistricting

A team of researchers from George Mason University (GMU), the Brookings Institution and Harvard University, in collaboration with Azavea, a Philadelphia-based software design company, announced the release of DistrictBuilder, a free, open-source, web-based software that will enable greater public participation and transparency during the upcoming electoral redistricting process. www.publicmapping.org, according to James Grief, Manager of GMU's Office of Media and Public Affairs.

The project is funded by a grant to GMU from the Sloan Foundation and led by Michael McDonald, GMU Assistant Professor of Public and International Affairs, and Micah Altman, senior research scientist at Harvard University. The project's participants have articulated principles for public participation and transparency in redistricting. Dr.

McDonald will be introducing a film on Gerrymandering for LWVFA on January 16.

"The drawing of electoral districts is among the least transparent processes in democratic governance," says McDonald, describing the problem identified by the project's participants. "All too often, redistricting authorities maintain their power by obstructing public participation. The resulting districts embody the goals of politicians to the detriment of the representational interests of communities and the public at large."

The participants seek to change the power imbalance held by redistricting authorities by making it possible for the public to draw the boundaries of their communities and to generate redistricting plans for their state and localities.

Nominating Committee Still Looking for a Few Good Leaders

By Sherry Zachry, Nominating Committee Member

As President Janey George states in her column in this *VOTER*, the LWVFA Nominating Committee is still searching for some people to fill slots on the 2011-13 Board of Directors, **including a new Co-President**. The Bylaws were changed to allow for electing a co-president for a two-year term every year, creating staggered terms which would mean that one person would be in training for a year before taking over as the lead co-president. Janey's term ends June 30, 2011, but she has agreed to stay on one more year to initiate this process. However, that only works if someone will agree to be co-president!

Another position that needs to be filled is **Program Director**. There are people who have agreed to help with program but, so far, no one has agreed to take the **board** position. The consequence of not having a person on the board that coordinates and plans the monthly topics is that there would be NO monthly topics for discussion at our unit meetings (other than what would be provided by other levels of the League). In that case, units would have to provide their own discussion topics with background material—or maybe provide a topic for all of the units, taking turns by unit for each month.

Along with Program Director, the **Voters Service Director** term ends June 30, 2011. **Carol Hawn** has done a wonderful job producing Voters Guides and other publications over the past years, as has **Lois Page** with producing interesting and timely program topics, but they cannot be expected, nor do they want, to continue fulfilling these roles forever. It is time for some new people to step up. Again, we have "helpers" but need a board person or persons. Both jobs involve organizational skills and being able to work with deadlines. Believe it or not, LWVFA used to have TWO people on the board for these positions, again with staggered terms—with two people, there is some relief and someone else to share the work.

PLEASE think about who you would want to see in these positions (men or women), including YOURSELF! Or find a buddy to share the job. Then contact a member of the LWVFA Nominating Committee and tell them. Committee members are: Viveka Fuenzalida, Chair – 703-404-0498; Julia Jones, 703-476-8347; Diane Hardcastle 703-860-3566; Gail Richmond, 703-360-6561 and Sherry Zachry, 703-730-8118. Your League needs you and being a board member can be fun.

November Program Results . . .

Members Ponder Role of the State Legislature

By Lois Page, Program Director

November's program featured a survey of our local delegation to the General Assembly (State Legislature) to discover what they think are the most important state responsibilities. All but one unit responded with a total of 90 participants. As might be expected, the issues of transportation and election laws received the most comments.

Because of the Dillon Rule, outlined in the study, the Commonwealth is more highly involved in local issues than is true in any non-Dillon states. Powers of the cities, such as taxation, are granted by the State. Fairfax County has less power to make unilateral decisions than do the various municipalities that have City status. One unit called it the "Mother, May I? Syndrome." Virginia's has a very strict interpretation of the Dillon Rule. Several members mentioned they are looking forward to LWVFA's upcoming study on the County becoming a City.

In addition to the eight major areas of responsibilities mentioned by the legislators (transportation, education, public safety, voting/elections, human services, courts, DMV and driving regulations, and regulating a range of human activities such as ensuring fair weights and measures), Leaguers wanted to add local and state gun control measures and taxation, since the only tax levied by the counties is property tax. (Fairfax and Loudoun Counties give more money to the State than they get back.) Several units wanted to include environmental protections (especially Chesapeake Bay issues) and immigration issues.

The study brought home to readers the fact that most road issues are handled by the State (one of only 3 states), although there are some public/private partnerships (HOT lanes). Because of this, the State's responsibility includes Metro construction, transportation bonds, road and median maintenance, and snow removal. And sidewalks! One unit wishes locals could monitor snow removal funds, as well as primary and secondary roads, since the State is out of funds due to budget. One unit feels that VDOT is unwilling to work with local officials to solve local problems. "Short changing urban areas hurts the programs to attract business to the State."

One unit noted that the State has far fewer environmental regulations that the County has which has an impact on road construction and maintenance. One unit felt the

State should be looking at raising gasoline taxes for road improvements. Greenspring observed, "The fact we don't have adequate funding for transportation may eventually affect the commonwealth's ability to attract new business." Several units found it interesting that work release prisoners are being used to do road work. Mt. Vernon Day is especially concerned about the impact of BRAC on their roads and the lack of state funds to fix them. They asked, "Any federal funds? Do they work together?"

Though schools are mostly locally funded, the state does regulate a number of aspects, such as what to include/exclude in courses through the Standards of Quality. It also licenses teachers and sets student-teacher ratios. One unit noted that the funding for state universities is dwindling to the point where out of state students' tuition is crucial to the budgets, but leaves fewer spaces for in-state students. Mt. Vernon Day asked, "What is the formula for state funds per county? Based on daily attendance?" Most units pointed out how important education is to the future of the State in many ways.

The group at the briefing wanted to see some changes in the state's oversight of elections and voting: facilitate voting rights for convicted felons and changing absentee voting regulations. They were also want redistricting by a non-partisan commission. Reston Day was more specific; they want "no excuse" absentee voting, voting on more than one day, and an easier registration process. McLean notes that many voters showed at the wrong precincts during the most recent elections and feels that voter cards should be mailed more often and signs should be placed to indicated name and number of precinct. Or was there foul play? DMV is not well trained to deal with Motor Voter registrations. Springfield suggested there should be a separate window in DMV offices for voter registration. Chantilly/Centreville add early voting and same day registration to their wish list. Reston Evening wants electronic voting machines back.

Regarding the relationship between the state and localities in the delivery of social services members observed that federal grants to counties (which the County has received in some abundance) allow them to bypass state funding. Some noted that state funding for these services helps to level the playing fields; however, since localities do supplement human service offerings, the poorer communities still are

(See **Program Results**, Page 8, Col. 1)

(Program Results, From Page 7)

short changed. Reston Evening observed that the State has stopped funding the General Relief Fund which was set up to give support to those who need it but cannot qualify for other assistance. Mt. Vernon Evening felt that both statewide and locally there is a lack of funding.

The issue of appointing judges (as is done in Virginia) versus electing them came up during discussion of the court system. Chantilly/Centreville feels that the state court system is underfunded, especially the probation system and public defenders. Reston Evening observed there has been an increase in women judges and they are coming from Fairfax County. "We agreed that it is a good that judges are not elected. A member pointed out that magistrates are state

employees and the state regulates the pay across Virginia to be the same. Some of the rules may be changing such as magistrates needing to be lawyers and localities not being allowed to subsidize the state pay to match local area pay scenarios." Mt. Vernon Day pointed out that magistrate pay is way too low.

Some people were surprised about the State's involvement in homeowners associations, but mostly all felt that the regulations are necessary, except maybe those involving acquiring state ID in person. Some felt the divorce and custody laws need work. One unit wondered how the funding works to regulate restaurants: the State makes the standards, the County Health Department enforces them—who pays?

Fairfax County Affirms Commitment to Workforce Housing for Tysons

Compiled by Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance

Fairfax County and the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Terwilliger Center for Workforce Housing recently co-hosted Tysons Workforce Housing Summit, showcasing the newly adopted comprehensive plan for Tysons and the future of workforce housing there.

The extension of Metro and the planned arrival of four metro stops in 2013 provided the framework for a multi-year community visioning process that produced comprehensive plan language to guide the growth of Tysons over the next twenty years, and a mechanism to revisit continued redevelopment beyond that date. The desired outcome of the plan is to create a more compact, pedestrian-friendly urban area with a mix of uses, multi-modal transit options, and plenty of opportunities for people to live, work and play. Central to the success of that vision are policies that dramatically increase residential development to provide balance to the job growth that is projected to take place over the next 40-50 years, the expected build-out period for the Tysons plan.

The new housing policies for redevelopment in Tysons require 20 percent of all residential development to serve households between 50–120 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). During a presentation at the summit, Fairfax County Chairman Sharon Bulova joined a distinguished panel of speakers led by former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros

and including Bart Harvey, former Chairman of Enterprise Community Partners; Tom Bozzuto, CEO of the Bozzuto Group; Ron Terwilliger, Chairman Emeritus of Trammell Crow Residential; and John McClain, Deputy Director, GMU Center for Regional Analysis in affirming the commitment of Fairfax County to housing at Tysons that serves households and a workforce at a variety of income levels. Among the themes reiterated during the presentation were:

- A 20 percent workforce housing requirement is achievable at Tysons;
- The provision of workforce housing is desirable and critical to the success of Tysons as a vibrant, economically sustainable urban center
- A supply of workforce housing will be essential to recruit and retain a 21st century workforce for Tysons;
- The entire Board of Supervisors is supportive of and committed to the housing policies for Tysons.

Other key stakeholders spoke about the importance of workforce housing to the future of Tysons. SAIC, a landowner and large employer in Tysons, shared their plans for residential development in redesigning their 18 acre site, and spoke about the housing needs of the 25 percent of their workforce that makes between 50-80 percent of AMI. GMU's John McClain opened the discussion with statistics on the number of housing units that will be needed (80,000) to accommodate the projected job growth, and noted that 55 percent of all jobs in Fairfax County earn \$50,000 or less.

At the close, the Terwilliger Center for Workforce Housing announced that they will be a partner with Fairfax County to provide technical assistance and support for developers working through strategies for financing and developing the residential component of their site plans.

Action Faction . . .

Highlights from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors November 16, 2010 Meeting

By Helen Kelly and Janet Al-Hussaini,
LWVFA Action Directors

Presentation of EQAC Annual Report

Stella Koch, Chairman of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC), presented their annual report that was unanimously adopted by the Board. The report included the following recommendations:

1. Continue funding energy efficiency and conservation programs. EQAC encourages the county to expand efforts to include energy use benchmarking and monitoring in non-residential buildings.
2. Continue to fund storm water programs from funds generated through storm water Service District rates and increase the rates by one-half cent.
3. Improve transit utilization through a systematic plan that includes multiple options within a community.

2011 Redistricting of the Magisterial Districts of the Board of Supervisors:

In order to include members of the community in the redistricting process, the Board will appoint an Advisory Citizens Reapportionment Committee. This committee will consist of two at-large representatives, one representative from each Supervisor's district and one representative from each of the following groups: the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Citizens Associations, the League of Women Voters, the African-American Community, the Hispanic Community and the Asian/Pacific Islander Community. *(Editor's Note: LWVFA has appointed Anne Kanter to serve as the League*

representative on this Citizens committee.)

The Board proposed a resolution that will provide a general statement of the goals, the criteria and the policies that will be followed in the 2011 redistricting process. Supervisor McKay, Chairman of the BOS Legislative Committee, will provide coordinating leadership throughout the redistricting process. The Board will adopt the redistricting plan in April 2011, at the same time that the budget is adopted.

Commuter Benefit Set to Expire December 31, 2010:

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act increased the monthly tax exclusion from \$120 to \$230 per month for employers who provide transit benefits to their employees. A recent IRS ruling that transit benefits must be separated from parking benefits will complicate the issue for employers and transit users. Local leaders fear that this may deter Metro use and add more congestion to already crowded roads.

The best chance to extend the benefit comes from a stand-alone bill requiring parity between parking and transit benefits. Senator Jim Webb sponsored this bill in the U. S. Senate; Representatives Gerald Connolly and Jim Moran co-sponsored the House of Representatives version.

The Board of Supervisors approved sending a letter to the county's Federal delegation requesting that the benefit level be extended for one more year and that employers be given more time to comply with the federal mandate requiring separate disbursement of transit and parking benefits.

Ackerman Named LWVFA's New Executive Director

You know Rona Ackerman, she has been a member of LWVFA for over ten years and has served as a Voters Service Director, a Program Director and is currently Secretary of LWVFA. But now meet Rona as the new LWVFA Executive Director! Rona has agreed to work in the office ten hours a week, replacing Kay McQuie who had to resign for family reasons. We are hoping that Rona can increase her time in



the office in the future when her term as Secretary ends.

Rona is an active member of the Reston Day Unit and has two girls, Lianne and Faye who keep her busy. Once she retrains her brain to think "PC" instead of "Mac" (on the new computer), Rona will have the office humming with efficiency in short order. We are delighted that Rona's considerable talents are being used to help LWVFA be a better League. Welcome Rona, we look forward to seeing you frequently!

League Believes School Board Should Continue to Set School Hours

Ginger Fitz Shea, LWVFA Schools Committee Chair, testified on behalf of LWVFA to the Fairfax County School Board at their December 2 meeting protesting its proposed policy change to give the superintendant the authority to set school hours.

The following is a portion of the statement. The full text can be viewed on the LWVFA website.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political membership organization which builds citizen participation in the democratic process. The League believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposal to revise the Fairfax County Public Schools' Policy 3415, which currently sets the length of the school day for students. The proposal is to revise this policy in its entirety to delegate authority to the Superintendent to establish the length of the school day "in accordance with school system needs and state law."

We note that there has been no effort to ask for community input on this agenda item. There is no work session on this topic currently scheduled between the introduction of this

proposal as new business and the vote, which is scheduled for December 16. Therefore the School Board has made no provision to modify these policy revisions prior to a vote. Since the choice is apparently to vote yes or no on the entire agenda item, the League recommends that you vote against this proposal.

We are particularly concerned that the proposal merely "sets principles governing" the length of the school day but does not actually establish the length of the school day for students. We oppose allowing the Superintendent to issue regulations establishing the minimum hours per school day.

Parents, teachers, and other members of the community have a right to have a voice in the determination of the length of the school day. The only way to protect our ability to have adequate influence on future changes in the length of the school day is to ensure that the School Board retains the full authority to set this major policy.

Setting the amount of time that students will be in school is a fundamental responsibility of local school boards. This decision should not be delegated to the Superintendent or any other employee or group of employees. The School Board has made no provisions for well defined channels for community input and review for decisions that are delegated to the Superintendent.

The League of Women Voters believes that governing boards should be responsible to the citizenry. We believe that the Fairfax County School Board should continue to be responsible to the citizenry by retaining its full authority to set the length of the school day.

Unit News . . .

The **Fairfax Day Unit (FXD)**, composed of folks who live in the City of Fairfax and surrounding County, has decided to join with the **Vienna Unit** that is now meeting at the Oakton Library at 11:30 AM on the second Thursday of the month. The unit is hoping to attract folks who work in the area during lunchtime. The next meeting will be Thursday, February 10.

The **Fairfax Station Unit (FXS)**, which changed to Thursdays in 2010, is considering returning to its former meeting day of the second Wednesday at 10:00 AM. This unit has members from Clifton, Fairfax Station, Burke and the surrounding area; they meet at the Burke Centre Library or at the home of Lois Page on Bracksford Court in southern Fairfax County. The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 9.

League Day in Richmond Scheduled For February 2

Join Leaguers from around the state on Wednesday, February 2, 2011 to learn what is happening in the General Assembly and talk to your legislators. League Lobby Day in Richmond will begin with the Women's Legislative Roundtable (WRT), hosted by the LWV of Virginia. LWV-VA Lobbyist Anne Sterling will update the group on the specific legislation that LWV-VA is monitoring. An afternoon training session about the online town hall concept called the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall is also planned. As in past years, there will be carpools from Northern VA leaving early in the morning on Wednesday, and leaving on Tuesday afternoon for those who want to spend the night; hotel rooms will be available at the Hilton Garden Inn. Contact Jane Hilder, Janet Al-Hussaini, Janey George or the LWVFA office at league@lwv-fairfax.org or 703-658-9150 for more information.

February Meetings:

Topic: Electricity in the National Capital Area



~ You are cordially invited to attend ~



The LWV of the Fairfax Area
General Meeting

Saturday, January 22, 2011

COUNTRY CLUB OF FAIRFAX
5110 Ox Road (Route 123 & Braddock Roads)
Fairfax VA 22030
10 a.m. – Registration & coffee

10:30 a.m. Speaker

Domestic Violence Today

Mehagen D. McRae. Esq

12:00 noon –Luncheon
(Reservations required for luncheon only)

Luncheon Reservation Deadline January 14, 2011— Cost: \$35 per person

Menu: House Salad With Raspberry Vinaigrette, Chicken Capri [Chicken Breast With Basil Butter and Angel Hair Pasta], Chef's Vegetables, Rolls and Butter, Dessert, Coffee Service

Program is free; Luncheon, \$35 per person.

Make checks payable to: **LWVFA** and mail with reservation form to:

2011 General Meeting, 10172 Turnberry Place, Oakton, VA 22124

Name _____ Lunch @\$35 ea. _____

Phone Number & E-mail _____

Guest(s)'Name(s) _____ Lunch @\$35ea. _____

Total \$ enclosed _____

For special dietary needs or questions, call Mary at 703-319-2185



The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA)
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703-658-9150. Web address: www.lwv-fairfax.org

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January, 2011

Jane E. George, President
Ron Page, Editor
Liz Brooke, Coordinator

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the public to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any citizen of voting age, male or female, may become a member.

LWVFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Dues year is July 1 through June 30.)

Membership Category: Individual \$65 ____; Household (2 persons–1 *VOTER*) \$90 ____; Donation \$ ____
Student \$32.50 ____; (Coll. Attending ____)

Membership is: New ____; Renewal ____; Reinstate ____; Subsidy Requested ____

We value membership. A subsidy fund is available, check block above and include whatever you can afford.

Dues are not tax deductible. Tax-deductible donations must be written on a separate check payable to LWVFA Ed. Fund.

Please Print Clearly!

Name _____ Unit _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip + 4 _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____ E-Mail _____

Thank you for checking off your interests:

<input type="checkbox"/> County Govt	<input type="checkbox"/> Voting Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Libraries	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Use Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Judicial Systems	
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Problems	

Mail to: LWVFA, 4026 Hummer Road, Suite 214, Annandale, VA 22003